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## Letters

### Prejudging the C.I.A.

To the Editor:

In composing its March 12 editorial "Son of Operation Chaos," The Times appears to have had a vested interest in supporting its December 1974 trumpeting that C.I.A. engaged in a "massive domestic intelligence operation," which turned out not to be so massive after all.

One would have hoped that The Times would have reflected the conclusions of the investigations that followed that charge, rather than saying that the C.I.A. in the past "thought nothing of opening the mail of innocent citizens, illegally searching homes and infiltrating political organizations."

The record of the investigations showed, on the contrary, that the C.I.A.'s steps over proper lines were few and far between, undertaken only after considerable soul-searching.

The letter openings, for example, were essentially limited to mail between the Soviet Union and the United States, in search of leads to Soviet agents in this country. The improper entries involved investigations of C.I.A. employees and ex-employees reportedly involved with foreign intelligence agents. A total of three C.I.A. agents reported on American organizations which they joined to go abroad to determine whether secret foreign assistance was coming to them, a question the C.I.A. answered in the negative.

The editorial also stated that

"Presidents finally cracked down on these abuses," although the record is clear that the C.I.A. itself terminated them before they were questioned by outsiders.

The most exasperating part of The Times's effort to produce a "Son of Rogue Elephant" scenario is its seizing upon a preliminary draft by a subordinate official, before responsible authorities reviewed it, and resting its editorial upon its provisions. This is as though a first draft of one of your journalists' copy was used as a judgment of the good sense and integrity of The Times before your editor had had a chance to review it.

The C.I.A. certainly should operate under clear rules that will fully guarantee the constitutional rights of our citizens. But equally, The Times should forswear the kind of hysterical Chicken Little exaggerations which, rather than regulatory directives, were the real sources of the serious wounds our intelligence services suffered these past five years.

Let's give President Reagan and the fine new leadership he has appointed to C.I.A. a chance to apply the Rockefeller Commission's conclusions as they revive our intelligence services and judge them on what they do, not what some subordinate suggests they might do.

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Washington, March 13, 1981

The writer was Director of the Central Intelligence Agency from 1973 to 1976.